

Natural Resources Memo: Idaho Conservation Data Center Species of Special Concern

Snake River Avenue and Southway Avenue Project Nez Perce County, Idaho

Introduction

The City of Lewiston in cooperation with the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) proposes to make transportation improvements to both Snake River Avenue and Southway Avenue in the City of Lewiston. The proposed improvements to Snake River Avenue begin at the intersection of the US-12 Dike By-Pass (MP 1.7) on the north end to extend approximately two miles south to the Country Club Drive Intersection (MP 3.7). This report documents the species of concern to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), describes their habitat requirements and potential presence in the project area, and assesses the impact of the proposed road reconstruction on these species.

Project Area

The project limits on Southway begin at the 8th Street Intersection and extend west about 0.75 of a mile to the Snake River Avenue intersection. The intersections of Southway/Snake River Avenue and Southway/8th Street are currently the only signalized intersections within the project limits (TRS: T35N R6W Sections 1 and 12, T36N R6W S36). The east bank of the Snake River runs along the entire west side of the project (see Figure 1, attached).

Land uses along the corridors are largely commercial/light industrial with some residential on Southway east of the Snake River Avenue intersection. Important recreational facilities exist on the west side of Snake River Avenue including the Kiwanis Park, the Levee Boat Ramp and parking area, and the Lewiston Levee Recreation Trail. In addition, the newly constructed Southway Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail runs along the south side of Southway.

The project area is located in the 4th field U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) Hydrological Unit (HUC) Lower Snake-Asotin River Basin (# 17060103). The Snake River flows through the middle of this Unit, which encompasses the Snake River reach from the Salmon River (River Mile 188) downstream to the Tucannon River (River Mile 64), which includes the mouth of the Clearwater River. The project area is located just upstream from the Clearwater River at River Mile 140 (the U.S. 12 Highway Bridge) on the Snake River. The Snake River in the project area is about 700 feet wide, with the project aligning the east bank of the Snake River at Lewiston. The Snake River streambank in the project area is mostly large boulder rip-rap, with some overstory trees and shrubs growing out and above the rip-rap upstream from the boat launching area.

The northern one-third of the project area on the westside is bordered by the Corps of Engineers ponds and Kiwanis Park, which historically was probably part of the Snake River 100-year floodplain. A paved pedestrian/bicycle trail runs almost the entire length of the project area. The Hells Canyon Dam (River Mile 248) on the Snake River prevents upstream movement of anadromous salmonids. The Snake River and two runoff channels in the project area have been degraded in the past by varying degrees from roads and commercial and residential development. Runoff channels that come from a development on the southeast side of Snake River Avenue have eroded a short section of streambank (under the Southway Bridge) along the Snake River.

Special Status Species

Agency Correspondence

To determine the species of concern to the IDFG for this project and known occurrences of special status species in the vicinity of the project area, an information request was submitted to the IDFG Clearwater Regional Office and Idaho Conservation Data Center (CDC) on October 18, 2005. The Idaho CDC identified the following non-federally listed animal and plant species of concern that have known occurrences in the vicinity of the project area (see attached letter, dated October 24, 2005):

Animals

- Ring-necked snake (BLM Type 5)
- Woodhouse's toad (BLM Type 3)

Plants

- Green-band mariposa lily (BLM Type 2)
- Idaho hawksbeard (BLM Type 2)
- Stalk-leaved monkey flower (BLM Type 3)
- *Orthotrichum holzingeri* (State GP 2)

In addition to the query of the CDC database, a data request was sent to the IDFG STREAMNET to determine the known occurrences of sensitive fish species in the project area. The agency listed the following fish species of concern that have known occurrences in the vicinity of the project area (see attached letter, dated October 31, 2005):

- Inland Columbia Basin redband trout (USFS and BLM Sensitive)
- Westslope cutthroat trout (USFS and BLM Sensitive)
- White sturgeon (USFS and BLM Sensitive).

IDFG also identified five federally listed species of concern, the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), spring/summer and fall chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*). These species are addressed in the *Biological Evaluation and No Effect Statements* prepared for this project.

The habitat requirements of the nine non-federally listed species of concern identified above, their potential or known occurrence in the project area, and the potential impacts of the proposed project, are addressed below. An additional wildlife species, the black-crowned night-heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) was identified as being within the project area by a concerned citizen that resides near the project area. This species is also addressed below.

Species-Specific Habitat Requirements and Impacts

Ring-necked snake

The ring-necked snake is found along the northern California coast from Sonoma County to the Oregon border, and inland through the Coast Ranges. Ranges north through Oregon into southern Washington, with isolated populations in Idaho.

The ring-necked snake is usually found under the cover of rocks, wood, bark, boards and other surface debris, but occasionally seen moving on the surface on cloudy days, at dusk, or at night. The snake prefers moist habitats, including wet meadows, rocky hillsides, gardens, farmland, grassland, chaparral, coniferous forests, mixed woodlands. Ring-necked snakes eat slender salamanders and other small salamanders, tadpoles, small frogs, small snakes, lizards, worms, slugs, and insects. Ring-necked snakes lay eggs in the summer, sometimes in a communal nest.

One historic occurrence of the ring-necked snake was recorded in the CDC database in 1897. The exact location of the capture at Lewiston is not known, however the project area does not provide preferred habitat for the snake.

No impacts to the ring-necked snake would result from implementation of the proposed project since this species is not known or expected to occur in the project area and habitat is considered unsuitable.

Woodhouse's toad

The woodhouse's toad occurs in the Intermountain West and Central states of North America into Northern Mexico and from the Atlantic Coast westward. It is restricted to the western portion of Idaho, particularly along the Snake River and its associated drainages. The toad is found in grasslands, shrub steppe, woods, river valleys, floodplains, and agricultural lands, generally below 7,000 feet in elevation in areas with deep, friable soils. Woodhouse's Toads are typically found in habitats such as prairies, agricultural areas and brushy flats often associated with a water source. The water source may vary from irrigation ditches, ponds, and small lakes to backwaters of the Snake River. Even though there is generally water in the area, they may forage quite a distance from the water source that they mate and lay eggs in.

One historic occurrence of the woodhouse's toad was recorded on the CDC database in 1898. The exact location of the capture at Lewiston is not known. Habitat for this species potentially occurs in the Corp of Engineers settling ponds, adjacent to Snake River and Snake River Avenue. However, this habitat is not ideal due to the unnatural river streambank and the adjacent developed area (road and businesses), and toads have not been observed there.

No impacts to the woodhouse's toad would result from implementation of the proposed project since this species is not known or expected to occur in the area proposed for improvement, and potential habitat in the adjacent settling ponds would not be modified.

Black-crowned night-heron

The black-crowned night-heron breeds from Washington and southern Idaho, east through parts of Canada and Great Lakes to Nova Scotia, and south to southern South America. It winters from Oregon, Utah, lower Ohio Valley, and New England, south to South America. It is found associated with brackish saltwater or freshwater situations in marshes, swamps, and wooded streams, and on shores of lakes, ponds, and lagoons. It forages primarily in shallow water, feeding opportunistically on fishes, amphibians, and invertebrates, and may also eat small mammals and young birds on land. The night-heron nests in small to large colonies and in Idaho, prefers to nest in trees and bushes such as alders, cottonwood, chokecherry, and willows. This bird is a protected non-game species in Idaho, with a Global Rank of 5 (secure) and a State Rank of S2B (breeding population imperiled).

A small colony (up to nine) of black-crowned night-herons reportedly nests in the northern part of the project area, in the Corp of Engineer drainage ponds south of US-12 along the Snake River and Snake River Avenue (personal communication with Carole Vande Voorde, Canyon Birders). As construction activities would correspond with spring breeding activities, herons would likely be disturbed and nesting potentially disrupted/aborted during the year when road improvements take place.

Green-band mariposa lily

The green-band mariposa lily is found in the Columbia Plateau region of eastern Washington and northern Idaho. The plant can be found in pristine habitats at low, mid or high elevations and occurs in rocky, basaltic soils and substrates on hillsides, rock outcrops, step grassy slopes, and cliffbands.

Two historic occurrences of the green-band mariposa lily were recorded on the CDC database in 1902 and 1925. The exact location of the captures at Lewiston is not known, but was found on grassy slopes of the Lewiston grade.

No impacts to the green-band mariposa lily would result from implementation of the proposed project since this species is not known or expected to occur in the project area and habitat is considered unsuitable.

Idaho hawksbeard

Idaho hawksbeard is found in Idaho, Oregon, and in Asotin County, Washington. Idaho hawksbeard flowers from May to June and is found at elevations from 3,280 to 6,233 feet (generally associated with bluebunch wheatgrass) and in canyon grasslands and dry mountain tops.

One historic occurrence of the Idaho hawksbeard was recorded on the CDC database in 1989. The exact location of the observation at Lewiston is not known, but 11 to 50 plants were found on a grassy slope near the top of the Lewiston Grade. The project area does not provide preferred habitat for the plant due to low elevation and lack of grasslands.

No impacts to the Idaho hawksbeard would result from implementation of the proposed project since this species is not known or expected to occur in the project area and habitat is considered unsuitable.

Stalk-leaved monkey flower

Stalk-leaved monkey flower is found in Oregon (where it is rare), and in Asotin and Okanogan counties, Washington. The plant is generally found on ephemeral seeps, moist basalt, and very fine gravel on top of bedrock in small drainages from 1,000 to 2,000 feet. The plant flowers from April to May.

One historic occurrence of the stalk-leaved monkey flower was recorded on the CDC database in 1894. The exact location of the capture at Lewiston is not known, however the project area does not provide preferred habitat for the plant.

No impacts to the Stalk-leaved monkey flower would result from implementation of the proposed project since this species is not known or expected to occur in the project area and habitat is considered unsuitable.

Holzinger's Orthotrichum Moss (*Orthotrichum holzingeri*)

Holzinger's Orthotrichum moss is endemic to western North America, found between 3,280 and 6,560 feet in elevation in California, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming (BFNA 2006). It is a unique bryophyte species that occurs in seasonally wet rocks in small streams and waterfall habitats of dry montane forests.

One historic occurrence of the *Orthotrichum holzingeri* was recorded on the CDC database in 1894. The exact location of the capture at Lewiston is not known, however the project area does not provide suitable habitat for this species.

No impacts to the *Orthotrichum holzingeri* would result from implementation of the proposed project since this species is not known or expected to occur in the project area and habitat is considered unsuitable.

Inland Columbia Basin redband trout

The historical distribution of all forms of redband trout included freshwaters west of the Rocky Mountains, extending from northern California to northern British Columbia, Canada (Behnke 1992). There are at least three forms of redband trout: (1) coastal, west of the Cascade/Sierra; (2) interior Columbia River; and (3) the Sacramento-San Joaquin. The interior Columbia Basin redband trout (ICBRT) form is more widely distributed within the Columbia Basin than any other salmonid (Behnke 1992). In Idaho, the only areas in the Columbia Basin that did not support redband trout were the Snake River upstream from Shoshone Falls and tributaries to the Spokane River above Spokane Falls. Currently, Lee et al. (1997) estimate redbands in the Columbia Basin occur in only 64 % of their historic range. The Inland Columbia Basin Redband Trout was petitioned for listing under ESA on April 3, 1995. A 90-day rejection notice was issued on September 20, 1995. However, this decision was appealed and the USFWS sued on the 90-day decision.

Redband trout in the Columbia Basin have two distinct life histories, anadromous (steelhead) and non-anadromous, with the non-anadromous divided into those that evolved with steelhead and those that did not. Life histories for non-anadromous forms

are variable and several have been described including adfluvial and fluvial migratory, non-migratory resident or stream-dwelling fish (Lee et al. 1997).

Redband trout are primarily spring spawners (March-June) although they may reproduce anytime of the year (Kunkel 1976). Water temperature and streamflow likely effect migration timing. Following spawning, redband trout may remain in place until migrating to overwintering areas in the fall (Thurrow 1990). Migratory juveniles typically move downstream to their ancestral lake or river after one to three years in natal areas. Sexual maturity typically occurs at three to five years, except in very cold or hot climates (Mullan and others 1992).

Redband trout appear to have evolved over a broader range of environmental conditions than other salmonids and appear to have less specific habitat requirements (Lee et al. 1997). They persist in some heavily disturbed basins, suggesting a less strongly influenced by habitat disruption than other salmonids. Redbands are often found in warmer waters than other salmonids.

Thurrow (1988) found redband trout most abundant in pool habitats and in association with cover components including undercut banks, large woody debris, and overhanging vegetation. Some have suggested that redband trout, like steelhead, may be associated with higher gradient channels, often in riffles or with substrates dominated by boulders, cobbles and pocket water (Kunkel 1976).

Results of the STREAMNET data request indicated the documented presence of the Inland Columbia Basin redband trout adjacent to project area in the Snake River. Both resident and migratory forms of trout could use this river. Habitat in the Snake River could potentially be impacted by road construction if work occurred in settling ponds and the active river channel and resulted in sediment delivery to the Snake River. This section of river primary is migration habitat and would be minimally affected by small fine sediment inputs. Potential new inputs of fine sediment would be minimized to the greatest degree possible by implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs) for erosion and sediment control and additional mitigation measures. With implementation of BMPs and the mitigation measures outlined in the Environmental Evaluation, the proposed project would not impact populations of inland Columbia Basin redband trout.

Westslope cutthroat trout

Westslope cutthroat trout were once abundant throughout much of the north and central portions of the Columbia River basin. Where habitat remains in relatively good condition westslope cutthroat trout are often found in most streams accessible to them (Rieman and McIntyre 1993). Westslope cutthroat trout now generally exist above barrier falls that have limited distribution of other species (Behnke 1992). First recorded as abundant in the Lewis and Clark expedition (Behnke 1992), In Idaho, westslope cutthroat trout are currently found in Kootenai, Moyle, Pend Oreille, Priest, Coeur d' Alene, St. Joe, Spokane, Clearwater, Lochsa, Selway, and Salmon river systems (Lee and others 1997).

The westslope cutthroat trout can occur in three life-history forms in a single basin; adfluvial (fish that spawn in tributary streams and spend most of their life in a lake); fluvial (fish that spawn in tributary streams and spend most of their life in rivers); and resident (fish that spends the entire life in a single stream). Resident forms predominate in headwater areas while migratory forms are more common in mid- and lower basin

habitats (McIntyre and Rieman 1993). Westslope cutthroat trout mature at age three, but first spawning occurs mostly at age four or five. Sexually maturing fluvial and adfluvial fish move near spawning tributaries in the fall and winter where they remain until migrating upstream in the spring to spawn (Liknes 1984). Because of their movement and distribution, and life histories, maintenance of habitats across relatively large areas, including river and lake basins is required.

Westslope cutthroat trout are generally found in waters that are relatively cold and nutrient poor (Rieman and Apperson 1989). Growth varies widely and is probably influenced by stream and lake productivity, but is generally higher for migrant forms. Growth influences relative productivity and resilience of populations to disturbance and increased mortality. Substrate composition strongly influences survival. Weaver and Fraley (1991) showed a negative relationship between emergence success and the percentage of fine sediment. Sediment reduces embryo survival (Irving and Bjornn 1984) and food and space for rearing juveniles (Bjornn and others 1977). Highly embedded substrates have been negatively correlated with juveniles' abundance (Thurrow 1987) and may be particularly harmful to trout that enter substrate in winter (Peters 1988).

The distribution and abundance of larger westslope cutthroat trout has been strongly associated with the number and quality of pools (Peters 1988; Pratt 1984). High quality pools appear to be especially important as wintering habitat (Peters 1988). Overall, the association of westslope cutthroat trout with habitat characteristics influenced by land management suggests they are vulnerable to habitat disruption.

Results of the STREAMNET data request indicated the documented presence of the westslope cutthroat trout adjacent to project area in the Snake River. Both resident and migratory forms of trout could use this river. Habitat in the Snake River could potentially be impacted by road construction if work occurred in settling ponds and the active river channel and resulted in sediment delivery to the Snake River. This section of river primary is migration habitat for migration forms of cutthroat and would be minimally affected by small fine sediment inputs. Potential new inputs of fine sediment would be minimized to the greatest degree possible by implementing BMPs for erosion and sediment control and additional mitigation measures. With implementation of BMPs and the mitigation measures outlined in the Environmental Evaluation, the proposed project would not impact populations of westslope cutthroat trout.

White sturgeon

White sturgeon were once widely distributed in the Columbia River basin. Along the Pacific coast, white sturgeon were found in accessible freshwater from the Aleutian Islands south to central California. The Columbia River is one of the three large river basins in the Pacific Northwest where white sturgeon reproduces. Historically, prior to dam construction on the Columbia River, white sturgeon were anadromous and migrated within the basin up to impassable falls. Snake River white sturgeon in Idaho are found in the Snake River up to Shoshone Falls, and in the Salmon River likely from the mouth upstream to the confluence of the East Fork Salmon River. Present distribution of Snake River white sturgeon has been fragmented into discrete subpopulations confined between mainstem dams (Hanson and others 1992). Hells Canyon reach along the Oregon-Idaho border contains the highest densities of Snake River white sturgeon.

Dams on the Snake River have prevented migration, fragmented riverine populations, and reduced the effectiveness of natural propagation (Hanson and others 1992). Dams have also decreased spawning success, by decreasing the amount of suitable spawning areas or creating poor incubation environments. In general, length of time required to reach sexual maturity, typically 10 to 15 years, results in low rates of natural recruitment.

Substrate size and water velocity influence selection of spawning areas by white sturgeon. Spawning occurs in water over three meters deep and over cobble substrate. In the Columbia River system, reproduction has been greater during years of high flows compared with years of low flow (Hanson and others 1992). Spawning also occurs earlier and at lower temperatures during high flow years (Hanson and others 1992). Adults and juveniles prefer deep-pool habitat with a fine bottom substrate. Adults tend to move downstream in the summer and fall months. Fish tend to stay in shallow water during the spring and summer and move to deep waters during the winter.

Results of the STREAMNET data request indicated the documented presence of the white sturgeon adjacent to project area in the Snake River. Both resident and migratory forms of trout could use this river. Habitat in the Snake River could potentially be impacted by road construction if work occurred in settling ponds and the active river channel and resulted in sediment delivery to the Snake River. This section of river primary is migration habitat and would be minimally affected by small fine sediment inputs. Potential new inputs of fine sediment would be minimized to the greatest degree possible by implementing BMPs for erosion and sediment control and additional mitigation measures. With implementation of BMPs and the mitigation measures outlined in the Environmental Evaluation, the proposed project would not impact populations of white sturgeon.

Summary

The City of Lewiston in cooperation with the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) proposes to make transportation improvements to both Snake River Avenue and Southway in the City of Lewiston. This document assessed the potential impacts of the proposed project on two wildlife, four plants, and three fish species of concern to IDFG. The conclusion of this analysis is that the proposed project would not adversely impact any of these nine species. This document also assessed the potential impacts of the proposed project on the black-crowned night heron, an additional Statewide protected species identified by a concerned citizen. The conclusion of this analysis is that the proposed project would likely impact breeding activities of the heron during the year that construction is implemented.

References

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*The Idaho
Conservation Data
Center collects,
analyzes, maintains,
and disseminates
scientific information
necessary for the
management and
conservation of Idaho's
biological diversity.*



October 24, 2005

Rebecca Thompson
Wildlife Biologist/Project Manager
Bionomics
110 W. 31st Street, Suite 200
Boise, ID 83714

Dear Ms. Thompson:

I am responding to your request for a list and database records of plant and animal species of special concern for the Proposed Snake River Ave/Southway Ave Idaho Transportation Department Project. ITD Project No. STP-7014(102), Key No. 9029. The project is located in T35N R6W Sections 1 & 12, and T36N R6W Section 36.

The Idaho Conservation Data Center database contains the following known occurrences either within or within the vicinity of the project area (see included database records for detailed information):

Animals

Ring-necked snake (BLM Type 5): one occurrence.

Woodhouse's toad (BLM Type 3): one occurrence.

Vascular Plants

Calochortus macrocarpus* var. *maculosus [green-band mariposa lilly] (BLM Type 2): two occurrences.

Crepis bakeri* ssp. *Idahoensis [Idaho hawksbeard] (BLM Type 2): one occurrence.

Mimulus patulus [stalk-leaved monkey flower] (BLM Type 3): one occurrence.

Non-vascular Plants

Orthotrichum holzingeri (State GP2): one occurrence.

Idaho Conservation Data Center, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, 600 South Walnut, P.O. Box 25, Boise, ID 83707
Phone 208.334.3402 FAX 208.334.2114 <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/>



Other Species to be Considered

Gray wolf: project is within the USFWS Idaho Experimental Nonessential Population Zone.

StreamNet provides the fish species of special concern data and their response is included as a separate letter.

For animal status definitions please go to <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cdc/animals/> and for plant status definitions please go to <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cdc/plants/> and follow the links for the species you are searching for. On the pages with species and status information you can click on the heading (BLM, USFS, etc.) at the top of the status columns and you will automatically go to the page with the status definitions for that heading.

If there are questions pertaining to this request please contact me at 208-287-2730 or smitchell@idfg.idaho.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Mitchell". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Stephanie Mitchell
Ecology Information Manager
Office Manager



**IDAHO FISH AND GAME
STREAMNET**

600 South Walnut/Box 25
(208) 334-3180
Boise, Idaho 83707-0025

Dirk Kempthorne/Governor
Steve Huffaker/ Director

Date: October 31, 2005

STREAMNET DATA REQUEST

FOR: Rebecca Thompson, Wildlife Biologist/Project Manager, Bionomics, 110 W. 31st Street, Suite 200

Boise, ID 8374, 208-939-1022 p, 208-368-0001 f, rebeccat@bionom.com

RE: Fish species of special concern

Location: ITD Project No. STP-7014(102), Key No. 9029, Proposed Snake River Ave/Southway Avenue Project, Lewiston, ID, TRS: T35N R6W Sections 1 and 12, T36N R6W S36

Federally listed threatened or endangered species and other special status fish species present and their status.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Use Type	Presence	Status:	F	S	USFS	BLM
<u>Salvelinus confluentus</u>	Bull Trout		7		LT	GLT	S	S
<u>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</u> <u>Pop 2</u>	Chinook Salmon (Fall Run)	1			LT	GLT	S	S
<u>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</u>	Chinook Salmon (Spring Run)	3			LT	GLT	S	S
<u>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</u>	Chinook Salmon (Summer Run)	3			LT	GLT	S	S
<u>Oncorhynchus nerka</u> <u>Pop 1</u>	Sockeye Salmon (Snake River Basin)	3			LE	GE	S	S
<u>Oncorhynchus mykiss</u> <u>Pop 13</u>	Steelhead Trout (Snake River Basin)	2			LT	GLT	S	S
<u>Oncorhynchus mykiss</u> <u>gairdneri</u>	Inland Redband Trout		7		SC	GSC	S	S
<u>Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi</u>	Westslope Cutthroat Trout		7		SC	GSC	S	S
<u>Acipenser transmontanus</u>	White Sturgeon (Snake River Pop)		7		SC	GSC	S	S

Please consult with the Clearwater Region fisheries biologists (208-799-5010) for further information.

Federal Status		Use Type (Anadromous)		Presence (Resident)	
LE	Listed Endangered	1	Spawning and Rearing	2	Historical Distribution
LT	Listed Threatened	2	Rearing Only	3	Documented Not Present
SC	Species of Concern	3	Migration or Present	5	Suspected Not Present
W	Watch	5	Not Present	6	Suspected Present
G	Gamefish	6	Suitable Habitat Blocked	7	Documented Present
S	Sensitive	0	Not Applicable		

This report is the result of a query of the StreamNet fish distribution database at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). Efforts have been made to ensure an accurate and complete database. However, not all IDFG fishery databases have been incorporated into StreamNet. In addition, other agencies have their own databases that may contain fisheries information not included in StreamNet. We recommend that you follow up this report at your local IDFG regional office and both state and federal natural resource agency offices.